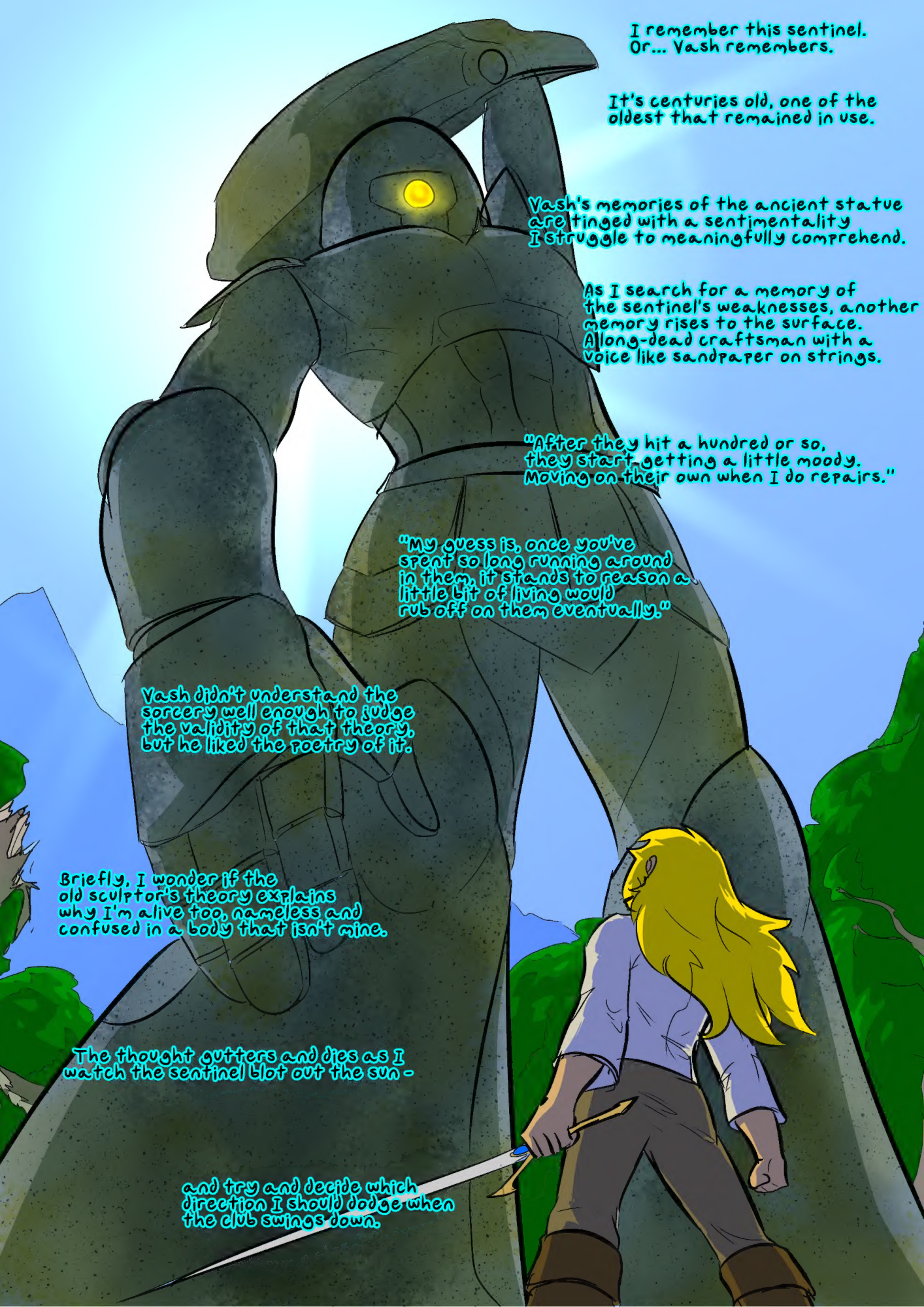
Chapter 3
Sentinel

KRAK
GET DOWN!
CRIK
DOOM
Stop grabbing me! It's not a good-
Run.
What?
RUN!

WHOOSH
creee
Good idea! Please don't do it again!
What IS that?!
CRUNCH
BOOM

One of Vash's guardian statues. A Sentinel.
A what?!
CREEEEK
SNAP
It's a - a stone soldier. Like a puppet. Vash used them to defend the city.
This one must've been lost outside the city during the collector's initial attack.
If it's a puppet, how is it active?!
I don't know, but it doesn't matter. You need to get somewhere safe.
What? It's coming after both of us, why-?
No, this is all - you shouldn't even be here!
Everything's so new, I - I didn't understand what I was asking you to risk -
If you die here, it's my fault! And I can't - I don't know how to DEAL with that!
So PLEASE - get somewhere safe and stay alive!

I...
it's not your fault that I-
HEY!


I remember this sentinel. Or... Vash remembers.
It's centuries old, one of the oldest that remained in use.
Vash's memories of the ancient statue are tinged with a sentimentality I struggle to meaningfully comprehend.
As I search for a memory of the sentinel's weaknesses, another memory rises to the surface. A long-dead craftsman with a voice like sandpaper on strings.
"After they hit a hundred or so, they start getting a little moody. Moving on their own when I do repairs."
"My guess is, once you've spent so long running around in them, it stands to reason a little bit of living would rub off on them eventually."
Vash didn't understand the sorcery well enough to judge the validity of that theory, but he liked the poetry of it.
Briefly, I wonder if the old sculptor's theory explains why I'm alive too, nameless and confused in a body that isn't mine.
The thought gutters and dies as I watch the sentinel blot out the sun -
and try and decide which direction I should dodge when the club swings down.

Left.
Away from Alinua.
BOOM
Guilt is a new feeling for me.
Technically, every feeling is.
But Vash hardly ever felt it. Without his experience, I'm at a loss on how to handle it.
Vash's brazen, hands-on approach to combat was a calculated strategy designed specifically to keep his people safe behind the walls and out of danger.
Whereas my impulsive decision to pin my objective on Alinua's unstable, deadly power has dragged her directly into the line of fire.
Her hospitality, her compassion -
The kindness she showed me, risking her life to heal a total stranger -
I took advantage of it all.
The ghosts of Vash chatter in the back of my head. Death has been cradling me since before I opened my eyes
It's already taken me too long to understand it.

No more.
SHFF
WHIZZ
Nobody else.
CLAK

CREEE
SKRITCH
KADOOM
CRUNCH
KSHH
The last living piece of my city,
and I just threw a rock through its face.

I'm no good at this.

Listen. Death is... scary, but it's not the most important thing in your life.
I've had a decade to process it.
You have to live for more than just survival.
I... don't get many opportunities to do anything good.
I don't want to scare you.
I'll try not to die while you're around.
Get somewhere safe and stay alive!

I'm such a hypocrite.
Of course I don't want to die.

CRACK
CRACK
CRACK

GRAW
CRACK
CRICK

...

This is bad.
Really, really bad.
NNGH!
CREAK
GRIND
CRACK
Well, at least that part worked.
CRACK
KA-DOOM

SMASH!

HN-?
Quietly.
Some fractures. Some breaks. Damage to my left leg means a significant loss of speed and mobility, and I only have use of one of my arms.
I'll be lucky if I can take out the legs before I collapse from injury or exhaustion.
But hey, at least I got the arm off.
I'd be giving myself a REALLY sarcastic self-congratulation if I'd bothered to pick a name before this.

CREAK
BOOM
GRGR

BOOM

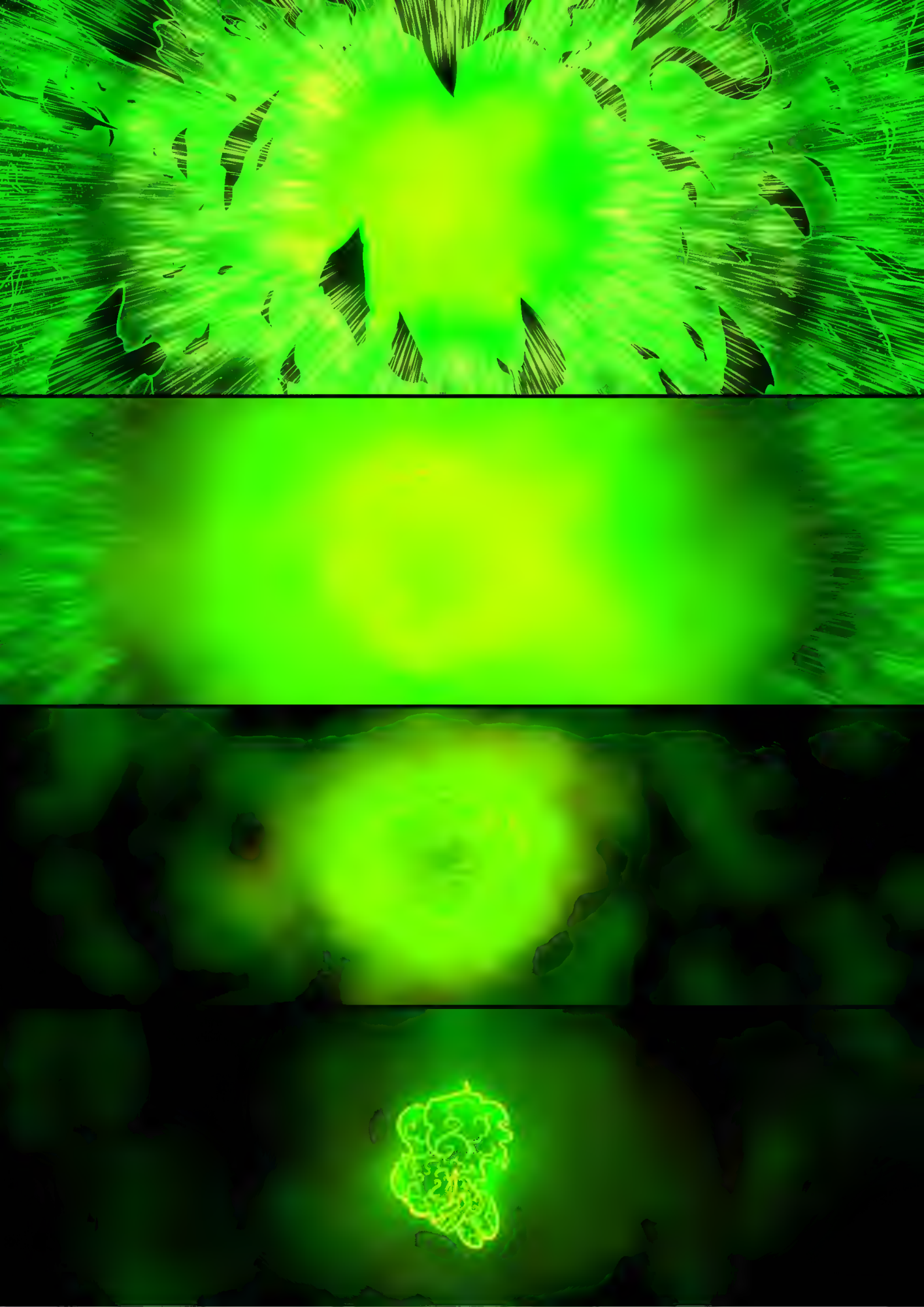
THUD
Thank you for your compassion.
I'd forgotten how it felt.
KH-
But this isn't your fault.
And actually, because of you...
HAH!
SHAAA
I get to do a little good first.

Alinua -
don't -
ALINUA!
CRACK
KRICK

WHIP
SWIT
WHOOSH
SHHH
WHIP

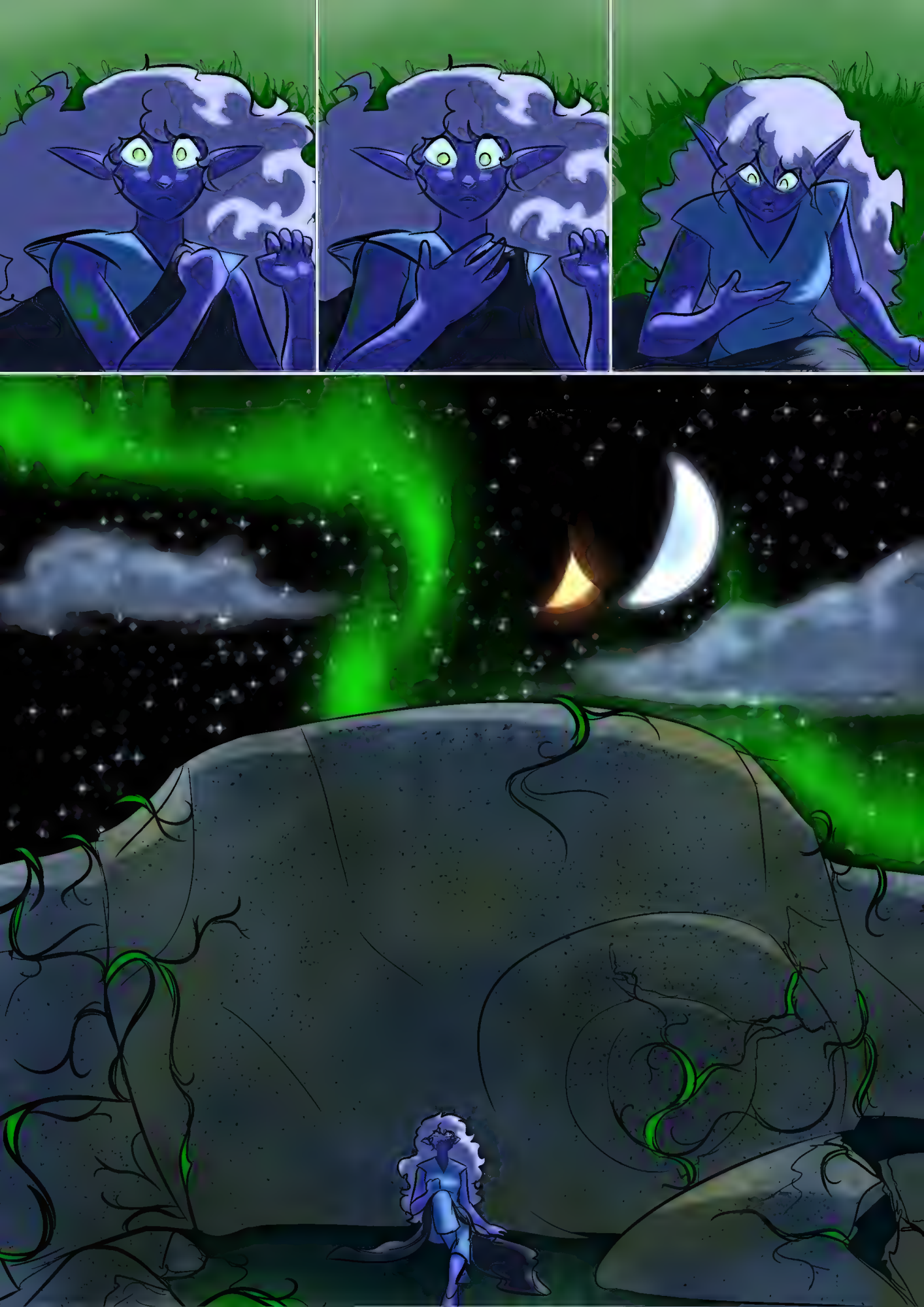
WHIRR
CRACK
CRACK
CRUNCH
CRACK
KRICK
GRUNH

CRACK



FINALLY

AAGH!



...nngh...
Oh - oh no!

It's...
it's not fighting me.
Everything's so CLEAR.
And...
...
Wow, you are a LOT less human than you look.

I mean, you're structurally similar, but your bones are a LOT more dense. Did Vash weave metal into them?
And I think your flesh wounds are built to heal about eight times faster than-
YOU'RE OKAY!
You - you wouldn't wake up, and I thought you were -
because of ME-
No, no!
I'm fine. BETTER than fine.
I'm really alive.

I wasted so much time in here.
SHFF
Are you really okay with just... leaving your home behind?
I already left my home. This place was my exile.
I locked myself away because I thought I was a monster.
It'd be stupid to stay here regretting how long I was wrong.

So where are we headed?
The singing caves have another entrance several days north of here.
That's where I'm headed, anyway.
SHAAAAA
But you're free to go wherever you want, you don't need to-
Hey.
Do you want to go alone?
Not really.
Me neither. Easy choice.

SHH..
Kendal.
Hm?
Vash named his sword "Kendal". In the first language spoken in this region, it means "right hand".
I think it works for me, too.
It's better than nothing.
Oh no! Is it that bad? I thought it was clever!
Eh. I'll get used to it.